

## CASFAA 2017-18 - Incoming President October 31, 2017 Monterey, CA

I've thought about what I might **want to** say as your incoming President and I've listened to folks throughout the Conference talk about the current political climate, the current status of financial aid and the challenges we face in the coming months.

I've heard our keynote speakers thank each of us time and time again - for the hard work we do. And remind us **that it is** important work we do each day and every day.

We cannot forget that **COLLECTIVELY** we help thousands upon thousands of students each and every day. Let's stop and think of that for a moment –

Life is a journey and we never know how our day-to-day interactions with others may touch someone's life.

We never know how we may impact someone else's journey.

Knowing this I say again - **Collectively** we help thousands upon thousands of students each day and every day. WOW that's powerful!

As I reflected on this year's conference theme 'FINDING YOUR VOICE', I found how timely it is in so many ways and how applicable it is to more than just financial aid.

We are living in interesting times but we cannot allow the current political climate to impact us to the point where we forget **who** we are, **how** we got here and why **what** we do each day and every day is so important to **ALL our** students.

In 1965 the Higher Education Act was signed into law with the intent to offer a way out ... A law intended to provide an opportunity to pursue a higher education degree for those that would otherwise not have the opportunity to go to college.

Everyone in this room is a product of higher education and the benefits that education has afforded each and every one of us. It has opened doorways for us, and has presented opportunities that we cannot, and should not, take for granted.

And as we listened to Ryan J Smith on Sunday afternoon I heard loud and clear that there is still a lot of work to do.

A lot of work to close the achievement gap.

Work to help our students find a way out of poverty.

Work to help our students of color, and work to help those who may not be in a position to fight for themselves.

We have to find our voice.

We have to speak out for whatever it is we are passionate about.

We have to speak out for what we believe in.

Now more than ever –we need to continue to speak out about

- the need for increased funding,
- the need to maintain the integrity of our federal and state aid programs without impeding our ability to help our students,
- the need for simplification so that we can focus on what we do best.

After all, **Isn't** that why we are here? To help **all** students achieve the dream? It starts in small ways – planting a seed – daring them to dream of what may be possible. To believe that College is Possible – and in the state of California, college is not only possible, it is affordable!

We conduct outreach, we help students complete the FAFSA or DREAM application, and we help advise and counsel on ways to pay for college. We assist them on navigating the beauracracy involved just to get in the door - in hopes that each of them will persist to graduation.

With all that is going in the world today – the optimist in me can't help but to search for something good that may come out of all the chaos.

And often I think back to the 60's and 70's – because I am old enough to remember the 60's and 70's! A time when people would gather - when people would unite and speak out for what they believed.

And **that time** has come again. It's time to stand up for what you believe in, for what you are passionate about.

Because as we have heard throughout the Conference- is that there is still work to be done.

My challenge to myself and to all of you in the coming year is simple.

How do we take this year's conference theme and ensure our voice continues to be heard?

How do each of you find the courage to speak out about whatever cause you are passionate about?

And how does CASFAA, as one of the largest state associations, support its members in fighting for what we all believe in?

I know we represent different school segments and we may have different agendas at times, but one thing we do have in common is our students

- UNITED - we represent **ALL** students of California,
- UNITED - our voices will be louder and more powerful,
- UNITED - we **can** make a difference.

I believe this to be true because I know individually the difference each and every one of you makes each and every day you.

During the Conference we heard Lupita and Justin and Ryan all speak to how you all are the “boots on the ground.” You all know what your students struggle with and what they must overcome to make it across the finish line.

How can we be the voice for **ALL** of our students?

How can we set aside our differences and UNITE our voices? How can we Keep The Dream Alive?

As I move into the next year – I want CASFAA to take a look at **who** we are? and **who** we serve? And, I want to continue our Advocacy efforts!

I want to update our website – and expand our electronic initiative efforts. Why I'd even like to us create some #hashtag marketing campaigns to support our advocacy efforts, to celebrate our student successes and to elevate our voices.

Don't get me wrong – nothing can replace that face to face **visit** or that letter writing campaign – but if you want to keep an issue out in front of people – if you want to gain

momentum quickly – you have to be ready to do more and ya gotta take advantage of today's social media.

I will leave you with this...

I know **I**, cannot do it alone. **You**, cannot do it alone.

UNITED - I know we can find common ground.

UNITED - we can support **ALL** students of California, and do the hard work that will always be ahead of us.

I hope many of you will get involved in whatever way you can.

Thank you for KEEPING THE DREAM ALIVE